



## Growing a Sustainable Economic and Social Ecosystem in Namibia

Namibia is a land of endless possibilities. Standard Bank Namibia taps into that potential with its promise of It Can Be and with the MycoHAB Project; the Bank seeks to make Namibia a shack-free country, boost employment and provide food security through the cultivation of mushrooms. Moreover, the project also looks at eliminating the indigenous encroacher bush that poses a significant ecological and environmental problem.

### 1. What is the MycoHAB Project?

It's a partnership between us, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT's) Label Free Research Group inside the Centre for Bits and Atoms, and US-based architecture firm Redhouse studio have partnered on an innovative and exciting social upliftment project in Namibia that uses fungal material from mushrooms to develop housing and food products. By leveraging technologies developed during a NASA project, we process waste materials to create food, jobs and shelter. In short, MycoHAB Namibia is turning encroacher bush into food and building materials while storing carbon dioxide to offset global greenhouse gas emissions.

### 2. How did it come about?

We wanted a new, better way to curtail the housing crisis and a sustainable way to curb the negative effects of the encroacher bush on our environment. The initiative solves the problem by turning it into building materials. These circular methods work well at converting the biomass of the encroacher bush into food and homes.

### 3. Why the Oyster Mushroom?

Oyster mushroom cultivation provides food using the least amount of water and land. While the mushrooms are growing, their root structures bind the encroacher bush's group particles, making a robust composite material that can compete with lumber and cement.

### 4. Is the Project Linked to the Buy-A-Brick Initiative?

The MycoHAB project is an extension of our

corporate social responsibility programme to tackle homelessness. It is being supported by the 'Buy-A-Brick' initiative, which aims to assist 500,000 no-to-low-income Namibians living in informal settlements.

### 5. What Does the Project Mean for Namibia?

MycoHAB is leveraging nature-based solutions to find new, sustainable, and local circular value ecosystems that help tackle the challenges Namibia is facing holistically. The building materials from the project are multi-functional. Buildings made with these materials will be affordable. This is also an opportunity for the youth to participate and gain invaluable skills. Through this project, we also contribute to a food-secure Namibia.

### 6. How Can the Public Support the Project?

They can purchase the MycoHAB mushroom packs from various retail shops. The corporate sector can also partner with us to make this project successful via investments to create clone sites and donations.

### 7. How does this project align with Namibia's Vision 2030, NDP 5 and the Harambee Prosperity Plan?

Namibia is our home; we drive her growth. These plans all speak towards attaining prosperity through industrialisation driven by Namibia's human resources. The project brings innovative and sustainable solutions to issues that Namibia faces. It will contribute to environmental sustainability, social transformation and economic progression.